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S E C R E T BAKU 000126

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/26/2020
TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM PTER AJ AF PK IR
SUBJECT: KHAMEINI REPORTEDLY COMMITTED TO LIMITED
"RECONCILIATION" DEAL; US ROLE IN RIGI CAPTURE
SUSPECTED/BLAMED

REF: BAKU 91 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Acting PolEcon Chief Shannon Runyon, for reasons 1.4 (b
and d)

Rafsanjani and Khameini "Reconciliation" Move?

¶1. (S) According to a Baku-based Iranian source with previously demonstrated access to information on inner-regime and reformist politics, Rafsanjani has obtained a written commitment from Supreme Leader Khameini to release large numbers of prisoners, return Revolutionary Guard detachments to their bases, and support the removal of election candidate veto power from the Council of Guardians. Khameini's commitment supposedly came on the heels of his February 10 meeting with Grand Ayatollah Musavi-Ardebili (ref a), and a series of related contacts with Rafsanjani and others. The source explained that the "reconciliation" faction within the ruling elite received a major boost "after the state forces nearly lost control in Tehran during the Ashura protests." He asserted that the Ashura events greatly shook Khameini and others who had been supporting Ahmmedinejad or sitting on the sidelines, creating space for an inner circle compromise.

¶2. (S) The source added that Revolutionary Guard Chief of Staff Mohammed Ali Jafari (an officer allegedly "much closer to Khameini than Ahmmedinejad") was scheduled to meet with Rafsanjani and other members of the Council of Experts on February 24 or 25. Source said this is an indication of movement of a substantial portion of the Revolutionary Guard away from active support of Ahmmedinejad. He speculated that the events of the next three or four days will considerably clarify the political situation, which he claimed is working against Ahmmedinejad, and predicted that Khameini's written pledge will soon be made public.

RIGI Capture "Blamed" On US

¶3. (S) Source said that the recent capture and transport to Iran of the Baluchi Jundollah separatist movement leader Abdulmalek Rigi is commanding the popular focus in Tehran today, and may be a political wild card. He "commented that "this is the only (recent) event that shows Ahmmedinejad doing something competent," and potentially popular. He added that the chatter inside the Iranian beltway and among opposition sources is that Rigi was captured by the Iranians in Afghanistan with crucial direct or indirect U.S. help (Note: we have also heard this claim from other Iranian sources.

End Note). The source said that he had been in touch today with pro-Baluchi autonomists who made the same assertion, and told him that "the real story" behind Rigi's capture will be released by the Baluchi organizations today or tomorrow.

¶4. (S) He asserted that the many reformists and most of the opposition are dismayed by Rigi's capture, any evidence and/or widespread belief in a U.S. role in Rigi's capture would be interpreted as evidence that the USG is throwing over the democratic opposition in the interest of doing a deal with Ahmedinejad and his group. "This (the alleged US assistance in capturing Rigi) will damage your position, not buy you goodwill," he claimed. (Note: Further illustrating what may be initial paranoia about the arrest, another Iranian source referred to Rigi's capture as "yet another intervention in Iran by outside imperialists." End Note.)

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